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SUBJECT: Operation Amani Leo: Old Wine in a New Bottle?

CLASSIFIED BY: Samuel V. Brock, Charge d'Affaires a.i., STATE,  
Embassy Kinshasa; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: Various MONUC officials have underscored that the overriding objective of Operation

Amani Leo is civilian protection, although several, including SRSG Alan Doss, cautioned that demands for no collateral damages from a military operation were illusory. The operation, according to Doss, was not a panacea for the FDLR problem. Responding to criticism that Amani Leo was simply a re-packaged "Kimia III," MONUC interlocutors stressed that Amani Leo was a leaner, more focused, better-targeted operation than Kimia II. Amani Leo will require vetting of FARDC commanders; a much smaller number of FARDC troops will actually be involved in operations (18 battalions vice 94 in Kimia II); operations will target FDLR leadership and economic interests; any MONUC support will require joint operational planning; and conditionality will apparently be used more readily as a stick. Legitimate concerns remain concerning the continued presence of human rights violators in certain command positions. CHOD Didier Etumba and Doss voiced concern about maintaining discipline amongst the 76 FARDC battalions, which are based in the Kivus but not involved in Amani Leo, once MONUC stops feeding them. Separately, the DRC, Rwandan, and Burundian CHODs, along with MONUC Force Commander General Gaye, met in Matadi on January 19 to demonstrate publicly their support for Amani Leo. The CHODs also called for closer intelligence cooperation to secure common borders and to better fight armed rebel groups in the region. End summary.

Announcing Operation Amani Leo: What it is

12. (U) Over the past week, various MONUC officials have provided emboffs with public and private assessments of the Amani Leo military operations, which officially commenced on January 1. During a January 13 press conference, Kevin Kennedy, head of MONUC's Public Information Office, listed the principle objectives of Amani Leo:

- protecting the civilian population;
- capturing strategically important zones, which negative forces currently hold;
- maintaining control of territory retaken from the FDLR; and
- assisting in restoring state authority.

In line with newly adopted UNSCR 1906, MONUC would place the protection of civilians at the center of the operation and its joint planning. In addition to civilian protection, the operation aims to "clean-up, hold, and construct" strategic territory. "Constructing," according to Kennedy, meant re-establishing state authority and rule of law. DDRRR efforts, Kennedy added, would continue to complement military operations.

13. (SBU) In a January 17 meeting with Goma-based diplomats, SRSG Alan reiterated the civilian protection aspect of Amani Leo, but cautioned that, "if the UNSC wanted zero civilian casualties, then MONUC would have to cease all operations." In a separate meeting with Goma poloff on January 15, Christian Manahl, acting head of MONUC's Political Affairs, underscored that everything would be done to mitigate consequences for civilians, but he noted that there are no military operations in the world that do not result in collateral damage. In an attempt to enforce better discipline on the FARDC, Doss announced that all FARDC commanders involved in Amani Leo would be subject to a vetting process similar to the USG's Leahy vetting.

14. (SBU) Doss acknowledged that Amani Leo was no panacea, aiming to completely neutralize the FDLR. Nor was Amani Leo simply "Kimia III" under a different name. Manahl said that operations would be "greater in number, but more focused." Joint operational planning

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would be mandatory for MONUC logistical support. Manahl described the conditionality paragraph of UNSCR 1906 as "micromanagement," but useful for MONUC to use as a stick to withdraw support when necessary. There were questions about what would constitute a "grave abuse," which would result in MONUC withholding support. MONUC has decided on a three-week timetable for the FARDC to respond to any alleged violations.

15. (C) In a smaller group, Doss noted that only 18 out of 94 FARDC battalions based in the Kivus would conduct field operations, thus leaving the majority of FARDC forces without MONUC support. Doss said that CHOD Didier Etumba had confided to him that the FARDC lacked the means to care for those troops not receiving MONUC support. In the view of Doss and Etumba, this represented a threat to civilian protection. Doss estimated that a modest contribution (\$1 per day per soldier or \$9 million per year) would provide rations for these units, making a vital difference in their quality of life as the all-important task of garrisoning FARDC units moves forward (Comment: This is a huge issue, in our opinion, which, if not properly managed, will almost certainly lead to increased FARDC exactions on the civilian population. The resulting international outcry will (once again) sully MONUC's image and lead to calls for all military operations to stop. End comment).

16. (C) In a January 19 conversation with polcouns, poloff, and TDY PRM officer, Stephane Auvray, Protection Officer in the Deputy SRSG's office, said that Amani Leo would be easier to manage and be more effective than Kimia II, which he characterized as "uncoordinated and useless." The idea of targeting the operations was welcome. Auvray maintained that only about 1,500 FARDC troops would be actively involved in Amani Leo. The idea was to get a smaller core of better-trained and better-disciplined troops to do the heavy lifting. In addition, it would now be much easier for MONUC to monitor the behavior of 1,500 FARDC troops in company-sized units, rather than the current 16,000 troops at the battalion level.

How it's different from Kimia II

¶7. (C) There are several important differences between Amani Leo and Kimia II. First, there will be significantly fewer FARDC forces involved in actual operations - 18 (8 in North Kivu and 10 in South Kivu) -with the remaining held "in reserve," as Auvray termed it, to hold and secure areas vacated by the FDLR. Secondly, the sorties should be smaller in nature, short-term, geographically-focused, "intelligence-driven" strikes against FDLR leadership and economic interests. MONUC expects one operation per week per province. Third, MONUC estimates that it will only have to supply logistical support to not more than 1,000 FARDC troops at any one time in each province. Fourth, as opposed to Kimia II where joint operation planning was severely lacking, Amani Leo will require Force Commander General Gaye to sign off on operational plans developed at a tactical level (Comment: While this is theoretically optimal and probably necessary given FARDC indiscipline, it could also lead to bureaucratic inertia and lack of initiative to undertake necessary or preemptive action. End comment). MONUC will set up Joint Tactical Headquarters at FARDC brigade headquarters responsible for carrying out operations. Fifth, MONUC intends, according to Manahl, to place a MONUC company alongside FARDC battalions during operations. Finally, the opportunity to vet FARDC commanders is a welcome change.

How it's the same

¶8. (C) First, perhaps the most glaring and unwelcome similarity to Kimia II is that the FARDC command structure remains unchanged, with former CNDP Chief of Staff Bosco Ntaganda unofficially involved in the operations and other ex-CNDP commanders holding key positions. For example, a MONUC contact told us that Lieutenant Colonel Kipanga, who was convicted in 2009 of raping four girls in

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Rutshuru, reportedly holds a command position in Amani Leo. Secondly, although MONUC's Joint Protection Teams have been deployed relatively successfully throughout the Kivus in an ad-hoc manner, MONUC's protection and human rights offices will not be allowed to participate in planning in or oversight of the operations (Comment: there may indeed be operational security issues that might warrant this. End comment). Third, there will be little or no ability to monitor FARDC elements in the area, which are not involved in the operations (Comment: while desirable in a perfect world, this is undoubtedly way beyond MONUC's capabilities due to resource constraints. End comment).

Regional CHODs Discuss Kimia II/Amani Leo

¶9. (SBU) Separately, MONUC Force Commander General Gaye joined the DRC (General Didier Etumba), Rwandan (General James Kabarebe), and Burundian (General Godefroid Niyombare) Chiefs of Defense on January 19 in Matadi to discuss lessons learned from Kimia II and plans for Amani Leo. The tripartite meeting was a follow-up to an August 31 meeting in Goma. Etumba presented a positive balance for Kimia II, claiming FDLR capabilities had been "drastically reduced." Kabarebe welcomed the progress, but encouraged the FARDC and MONUC to continue pursuing the FDLR "to eradicate the group, i.e., to entice FDLR elements to surrender, renounce armed conflict, and release Rwandan citizens held hostage in the DRC since 1994." Kabarebe called for "joint monitoring" of the situation on the ground, and Niyombare urged more intensified intelligence sharing by the three countries to better secure common borders. In an apparent reference to the Group of Experts Report, which claimed that FDLR forces had used Burundi as a safe haven, Niyombare stated that a GoB investigation into the matter did not confirm these allegations. He, nevertheless, acknowledged that

"uncontrolled armed elements or demobilized Burundians" may be assisting FDLR forces along the border.

¶10. (SBU) The participants agreed to the following actions:

- maintain the current tempo of operations to ensure that Amani Leo is successful;
- hold regular meetings at different command levels to share intelligence regarding the operations;
- implement joint monitoring on the ground and a mechanism for intelligence sharing between the three countries;
- intensify efforts to encourage the population not to sympathize with the FDLR.

¶11. (C) Comment: There are many question marks surrounding how effective Amani Leo will be operationally, in protecting the civilian population, and in curbing FARDC human rights violations. A more targeted approach is welcome, but it should maintain steady pressure on key FDLR assets, rather than one-two fleeting successes per month. Just as the military option is necessary to pressure the FDLR to surrender, the "carrot" of DDRRR must remain a viable option for FDLR combatants. The international community should voice its strong disapproval at the presence of wanted war criminals and convicted rapists in Amani Leo's command structure. Despite public proclamations in support of operations, it is uncertain how committed the GDRC will remain to conduct anti-FDLR operations over the long-term - and "dealing with the FDLR" will be a long-term task. Operation Amani Leo is not, as Doss said, a panacea. How the 76 FARDC battalions, stationed in the Kivus and suddenly cut off from MONUC care and feeding, will react is critical, and potentially destabilizing if they began to prey on the local population. Although we see various challenges/problems facing the Amani Leo Operation, it is probably the best we can hope for given the circumstances on the ground. To do nothing would be to simply abdicate any responsibility to try to rid the Eastern DRC of negative forces that have plagued the region for over a decade. The new and improved aspects of Amani Leo - vetting of commanders,

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utilizing smaller more focused FARDC elements, conditionality (absolutely crucial), and an improved joint planning structure - outweigh any negatives. The international community, not to mention the GDRC, still needs MONUC assistance, if there is any hope to eliminate the FDLR problem. We are, nevertheless, entering a new phase in MONUC's relationship with the GDRC, as both sides begin thinking about "life after MONUC." In this vein, MONUC, the international community, and the GDRC may have to settle for less than optimal solutions, which, nevertheless, correspond to the situation on the ground. Less MONUC/international community may even have some upsides: who would have predicted a year ago that the DRC, Rwandan and Burundian CHODs would agree to cooperate more closely on intelligence matters?

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